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IEMA Highlights Role of Volunteers in Disasters

Volunteers assist with preparedness, response and recovery

SPRINGFIELD – As several Illinois communities continue to recover from tornadoes, flooding and severe storms in 2015, the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) and local emergency management agencies are highlighting the critical roles volunteers play in disaster preparedness, response and recovery efforts as part of a month-long focus on volunteers in disasters.

“Volunteers play a key role in disaster preparedness, response and recovery,” said IEMA Director James K. Joseph. “Before disaster strikes, volunteers can encourage personal preparedness to help people stay safe during emergencies. When a disaster strikes, voluntary organizations spring into action to help people in their community, region or across the country. Volunteers even play a vital role in ensuring the long-term recovery of a community affected by a disaster.”

One nationwide volunteer initiative, the Citizen Corps Program, was launched after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks to encourage public involvement in efforts to make communities safer, stronger and better prepared to respond to emergencies. IEMA administers the Citizen Corps program in Illinois, which includes 66 local Citizen Corps Councils.

In addition to efforts to encourage personal preparedness, Citizen Corps Councils in 53 Illinois communities have established volunteer response teams known as Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs). Volunteer CERT members train and practice response skills such as locating, transporting and providing basic medical treatment to injured people in order to be prepared to support local first responders during disasters.

More information about Citizen Corps Councils, including how to establish a local council, is available at www.Ready.Illinois.gov.

Disaster volunteer opportunities vary from community to community. People interested in learning more about how to volunteer to help before, during or after a disaster can contact local voluntary organizations or their local emergency management agencies for information about opportunities in their area.

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